

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
APRIL 13, 2021**

The Workshop Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Park District of Highland Park was conducted remotely due to the Governor’s Declaration of Emergency as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Members of the public were able to view a live stream of the Workshop Board Meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Ruttenberg.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf , Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

Absent: None

Staff Present: Executive Director Romes; Director Smith, Director Voss, Director Dunn, Director Peters, Director Gogola, Director Carr; Assistant Director Maliszewski; General Manager/Superintendent of Golf Operations Ochs; Manager Johnson

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Executive Director Romes provided a brief update regarding the access gate at Park Avenue Boating Facility, since this has been a topic of discussion between Park District staff and the City of Highland Park, and the topic was brought up at last night’s City Council Meeting. Over the past year, the Park District was faced with unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic, which forced staff to quickly adapt and improve upon safety and security systems while continuing to enrich the lives of the community. Over the past six months, Park District staff has been working closely with public works, fire, and police officials and members of the boating community to address the overwhelming and alarming safety concerns at the lakefront, specifically issues regarding access control. While there have always been access control measures in place at Park Avenue, those measures changed in 2020 when the City of Highland Park eliminated the city vehicle program and relinquished all responsibilities to the Park District. Additionally, the City would no longer staff a police assistant to monitor Park Avenue. As a result, the Park District appropriately controlled Park Avenue access and safety 7-days a week throughout the summer season and weekends over the fall. Executive Director Romes reported that the Park District managed a safe boating season regardless of the challenges from the pandemic, however, there were many trials and tribulations learned. As a result, the Park District proposed and worked with City officials on the installation of an access control gate at Park Avenue. City and Park District attorneys prepared a non-exclusive special license agreement for the installation of an access gate system to improve the Park Avenue Boating Facility public right away. This agreement along with the Park District’s operational plan was shared with City Officials, the Park District’s Finance Committee in an open session on February 4, and with the entire Park

Board of Commissioners at the March 9 Workshop Meeting, at which point the Park Board approved the license agreement giving consensus to the operational safety benefits and the needs it addresses.

Executive Director Romes provided a brief background of the property, reporting that Park Avenue has a north beach and adjacent parking lot, located east of the beach. Both the north beach and adjacent parking lot are owned and managed by the Park District. There is also a south boating facility located at the bottom of the hill, which is owned by the City, however, the Park District manages and maintains this area through a lease agreement. Per the agreement of the remaining space, the Park District is responsible for supporting the infrastructure, the maintenance of the site, and the safety and security of the site. The lease agreement excludes the water treatment plant, as that facility is owned and operated by the City. With this being said, the south property which the Park District maintains and operates for boating is supported in part by the North Shore Yacht Club, who leases a Park District-owned building at that same location, and the boating community who pays fees to store, launch, and park at the site. This includes kayakers, stand-up paddleboarders, sailors, power boaters, and anyone else who uses personal watercrafts.

The proposed gate system, which has already been permitted by the City, is intended to be a user-friendly system that has the flexibility to be opened and closed through a key fob. Key fobs will be distributed to all City and Park District staff and those who purchase a launch pass or a parking pass for the boating facility. Additionally, there is emergency access for emergency vehicles along with remote access control from a cellular or wi-fi device that allows staff to permit or deny access at any time from any location. The City has also been afforded the ability for remote access to open or close the gate when necessary. The access control gate will assist the Park District in ensuring that the site is being used safely by the aforementioned users while allowing access to the general public by means of walking or biking during the boating season. The gate will be open to vehicular traffic during the non-boating season. Additionally, access to the north parking lot is not controlled by the gate which the general public can utilize this parking lot from dusk until dawn.

Executive Director Romes reported that the Park District is aware that City Council rejected approval of the special license agreement for the installation of the access control gate, however, they voted to continue the consideration of the license agreement which will be discussed at the April 26 City Council Meeting, citing concerns with limiting vehicular access most notably during non-peak times for those who wish to drive to the site and enjoy the views of Lake Michigan. He reported that it is important for the Park District to note that in 2020 there were no non-peak hours during the summer months as there was an unprecedented visitation to the beach and boating facility. Additionally, in 2020 if vehicles did not have a Park District-issued parking decal those vehicles were not permitted to enter the southern boating facility for safety reasons and operational integrity. Although Park District staff are hopeful that this summer will not come with those same challenges, however, staff has seen a significant increase in outdoor recreation participation, so staff are anticipating lakefront activity to be in high demand.

Since the country is still in a pandemic both the state and the federal government are requiring organizations to follow safety guidelines and occupancy standards, therefore whether or not there is a gate at a Park

Avenue the Park District is still responsible for enforcing those guidelines and occupancy standards, so the Park District will schedule an employee to monitor access to the site 7-days a week. Access to the southern portion of the site will only be permitted to those who have purchased a Park Avenue parking decal. However, the proposed gate installation will provide for a flexible, adaptable, and user-friendly experience that can be adapted in person or remotely at any time, from day-to-day or year-to-year. Staff feels this is a tremendous benefit to the Park District, the City of Highland Park, and the users of the Park Avenue Boating Facility. Park District staff have been in communication with City Officials, and scheduled a meeting on April 14, to ensure both parties continue to work collaboratively and address the access gate and Park Avenue Operations. Executive Director Romes reported that he will follow up with the Park Board of Commissioners and the community once a resolution has been determined.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA – None

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to approve the Beach Management Plan, the 2021 Landscape Services Bid, Additional Path Work at the Preserve of Highland Park, and the Pool Heater Replacement Bid for the Hidden Creek AquaPark.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg
Nay: None
Absent: None
Abstain: None

REVIEW OF VOUCHERS

Director Peters reported that the vouchers from March 26 through April 8 totaled a little over \$450,000.

President Ruttenberg reported that he reviewed the vouchers and did not find anything extraordinary that would need to be discussed.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD – None

CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan, seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to adjourn into Closed Session for discussion of Section 2(c)1 – the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline of the District including legal counsel for the District; – the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the District; - for discussions between internal or external auditors and the Board.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores
Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 6:15 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 7:29: p.m.

ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY

No action was taken during closed session.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Romes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Brian Romes, Secretary